

Message Text

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FM SECSTATE WASHDC

TO AMEMBASSY SAN JOSE

AMEMBASSY PANAMA

C O N F I D E N T I A L STATE 040690

LIMDIS

FOLLOWING REPEATS EC BRUSSELS 01534 ACTION SECSTATE 13 FEB

QUOTE C O N F I D E N T I A L EC BRUSSELS 01534

LIMDIS

PASS AGRICULTURE

EO 11652: GDS

TAGS: EPAP, ETRD, EAGR

SUBJECT: 1976 MEAT IMPORT PROGRAM

REF: (A) STATE 020860, (B) STATE 020861

1. EC COMMISSION DIRECTOR GENERAL FOR AGRICULTURE RABOT CALLED IN MISSION OFFICERS ON FEBRUARY 12 TO SUPPLY FURTHER DETAILS REGARDING THE POSSIBILITY OF EC IMPORTS OF BEEF FROM PANAMA AND COSTA RICA. RABOT APOLOGIZED FOR THE DELAY IN FOLLOWING THROUGH ON HIS ASSURANCES TO DEPUTY ASSISTANT SECRETARY KATZ AND EXPLAINED THE DIFFICULTY HE HAD HAD IN OBTAINING THE INFORMATION. HE WAS ABLE TO GIVE US, FOR THE MOMENT, THE FOLLOWING REPLIES TO THE QUESTIONS IN REFTEL A.

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2. THE IMPORTER WOULD BE SOCOPA, WHICH HAS BRANCHES IN FRANCE

AND GERMANY. THEREFORE, CONTRARY TO PARA 3C OF REF. B, IN EFFECT, ONLY ONE IMPORTER HAS BEEN CONTACTED BY THE COMMISSION, BUT THIS IS THE FIRM WHICH HAS HANDLED THE OVERWHELMING MAJORITY OF THE TRANSACTIONS UNDER THE COMMUNITY'S PREVIOUS SYSTEM OF IMPORTS MATCHED AGAINST EXPORTS (EX-IM).

3. THE COMMISSION RECOGNIZES THAT ONLY RELATIVELY SMALL QUANTITIES OF BEEF WOULD BE AVAILABLE FOR EXPORT TO MEMBER STATES, PARTIALLY BECAUSE OF THE LIMITES SLAUGHTER FACILITIES IN THE TWO COUNTIES. (THEIR STATISTICS DATE BACK TO 1970.)

4. THE COMMISSION CANNOT ACCURATELY EVALUATE RELATIVE EXPORT COSTS OF PANAMA AND COSTA RICA COMPARED WITH ARGENTINA BECAUSE DIFFERENT EXPORT AND MONETARY POLICIES, INFLATION RATES, AND OTHER SIMILAR FACTORS COMPLETELY MAKES THE REAL EXPORT COST. IN DECEMBER 1974, ARGENTINE MEDIUM STEERS COST 10 PESOS PER KILO LIVEWEIGHT. BY END JANUARY, THE PRICE HAD TRIPLED TO 30 PESONS. THE COMMISSION CONCLUDED THAT THE COST OF BEEF IN COSTA RICA AND PANAMA WOULD NOT BE LESS THAN IN ARGENTINA.

5. THERE ARE SEVERAL SHIPPING COMPANIES THAT CARRY REEFER CARGO FROM CENTRAL AMERICA TO NORTHERN EUROPE AND THE MEDITERRANEAN. SINCE BEEF SHIPMENTS WOULD BE IRREGULAR FROM CENTRAL AMERICA, THEY WOULD PROBABLY HAVE TO BE FROZEN AND NOT REFRIGERATED. BUT THE COMMISSION BELIEVES THAT THERE WOULD BE NO DIFFICULTY IN FINDING ADQUATE FREEZER SPACE. THESE ARE, HOWEVER, COMMERCIAL QUESTIONS THAT WOULD HAVE TO BE WORKED OUT BY THE TRADE. AS RABOT SEES IT, THE FIRST TASK IS TO MAKE SURE THERE ARE NO ADMINISTRATIVE HINDERANCES AND TO PUT THE EC IMPORTERS AND CENTRAL AMERICAN EXPORTERS IN TOUCH SO THAT THEY CAN BEGIN A BUSINESS-LIKE EXPLORATION OF THESE COMMERCIAL ASPECTS.

6. ANY SMALL IMPORTS OF BEEF INTO THE EC ARE FROM PLANTS APPROVED BY THE IMPORTING MEMBER STATES. SINCE THESE SAME PLANTS SUPPLY BEEF TO THE U.S. UNDER U.S. ANIMAL HEALTH AND BETINEARY REQUIREMENTS, THE COMMISSION CONCLUDES THAT THERE SHOULD BE NO GREAT DIFFICULTY FOR THESE SAME PLANTS TO COMPLY WITH COMMUNITY LEGISLATION WHETHER THE BEEF IS FROZEN OR CHILLED.

7. THE COMMISSION CONCLUDES THAT (A) THERE WOULD BE NO PATENT
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OBSTACLE TO IMPORTS OF COSTA RICAN OR PANAMANIAN BEEF INTO SOME AND POSSIBLY ALL MEMBER STATES, (B) SHIPMENTS WOULD BE SMALL AND PROBABLY IN FROZEN FORM, AND (C) PRICES WOULD BE IN LINE WITH WORLD MARKET PRICES.

8. RABOT SAYS THAT SOCOPA HAS BEEN IN TOUCH WITH THE EMBASSIES OF FIVE OF THE CENTRAL AMERICAN CONTRIES (INCLUDING PANAMA AND COSTA RICA). HE ANTICIPATES THAT HE WILL SHORTLY RECEIVE FROM

SOCOPA A FULL ACCOUNT OF THE CONTACTS IT HAS BEN ABLE TO MAKE,
AND HE WILL FURNISH THIS TO US. MORRIS UNQUOTE INGERSOLL

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